

SAFE
An Introduction to Situational Awareness
by
Larry Alvarez

On November 14th 2019, at Saugus High School, a student started shooting his classmates, killing two and shooting 3 more before turning the gun on himself. The shooter was in my daughter's 1st period class and my son had to run from the Quad where and when the shooting started. This, as other incidents before this one, and incidents sure to follow, should never have happened. Signs and signals were missed.

I am not discussing this to instill fear but because I want to help as many people as possible learn how to become more situationally aware, and then be better able to help their loved ones do the same.

The Saugus High School Shooting is what prompted me to take a stronger position in educating people on the importance of being able to spot violence BEFORE it happens.

We have all heard the saying, "If you see something, say something." But do we know what to say? Is what we say meaningful? Does what we say have substance? And if so, who do we say it to?

With threat detection and situational awareness training, you will be empowered with the skills necessary to identify, categorize, and articulate pre-incident indicators of predatory criminal violence and be in a better position to avoid, report, and prevent these tragedies.

We have to understand that HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGY.

By being more situationally aware, you will develop the mindset and tools to help identify crucial pre-event indicators in order to prevent dangerous incidents before they occur.

Situational awareness is the perception of the elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future. In simple terms, situational awareness is developing the observation skills necessary to recognize what is happening around us.

It doesn't matter if you are a military combat veteran, experienced police officer, or brand new to the concept of threat detection. With awareness and practice, you can easily become comfortable with the basic concepts and skills that can be applied anywhere such as work, school, the mall, restaurants, movie theaters, the gym, hair or nail salon, or even your favorite coffee house.

By learning the basic concepts associated with situational awareness, you will be able to learn to avoid, or even stop, violence BEFORE it occurs.

Speeding up the Decision-Making Process

Introduces the concepts of proactively using your brain to scan for threats. Learn to recognize baseline patterns and identify predatory behaviors to stay "*Left of Bang.*"

Your Brain Under Stress or Threat

Introduces the roles of the forebrain, midbrain, and limbic system and how the natural functions of the forebrain will try to reason away threats.

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Biometrics

Biometrics refers to observable indicators that cannot be stopped. They are the body's automatic reactions to stress or fear. Sometimes referred to as the fear response in the body. They are hormones released during a limbic system response that can cause recognizable physical indicators.

Kinesics

Kinesics is the study of non-verbal communication that happens between human beings. Non-verbal communication comprises upwards of 60-65% of all communication. Learning to recognize kinesic cues can help you to better recognize threat behaviors.

Proxemics

Proxemics is the interpretation of special distance and dynamics of human interactions. Learning to recognize proxemic violations make it much easier to spot individuals who are not playing by the rules.

Atmospherics

Atmospherics refers to the attitude or collective mood of a place and relies on indicators from all of the behavior domains and summarizing them.

By applying the skills associated with good situational awareness, you will be more aware of potential threats. You will be aware of potential behavior that could indicate sexual assault or harassment, human trafficking, insider threats, fraud, bad faith or deceptive behavior, and depression or suicidal behavior.

Always remember, HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGY.

Stay safe out there.